

## **Bibles???**

### **The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority**

Turn your bibles with me to the Book of Romans

We are continuing our verse-by-verse study through this amazing letter.

Paul – under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wants to make sure that we grasp the foundational truths of our faith.

That we can have a right standing before God – that He has made a way - it is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

That is the gospel of Jesus Christ – it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

And that is exactly how the early church started – Just like Jesus told the apostles in the book of Acts –

**“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”**

For the Jew first – and also for the Greek

Even though – the early church was made up of mostly Jewish converts in Jerusalem – as the gospel began to spread to the different regions – the Jews began to reject the gospel of grace and their Messiah.

The Gentiles – many of them responded to the work of the Holy Spirit tugging at their hearts - they grasped the gospel of grace.

“This is what I want”

“I want my sins forgiven”

“I want to be right with God”

But not so much for the Jew -

Paul anticipates being asked by Jews who are going to hear this letter – what about us?

Questions as to why God has temporarily set Israel aside – to work among the gentiles to bring the good news into the world?

What about the promises that God has made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob?

Has God forsaken us?

Is God going to keep those promises?

And some of them might even go as far as to question God's faithfulness or even make the claim that God is unfair.

In our text this morning – Paul is going to use a few biblical illustrations to present to the Jew and us – the subject of His calling and His election.

And Paul will tell us that this is how God has always done it.

He called and elected Israel and He called and elected you and me.

And the calling and election is the result of His grace alone.

Let's pray...

### Read Text

What makes us a Christian?

Some believe that going to church every Sunday makes us a Christian – nope

The fact that I was baptized makes me a Christian – nope

I read my bible every day - nope

I raised my hand in a service – nope

Or I grew up in a Christian home therefore I am a Christian – nope.

Jesus told Nicodemus - unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God

Being a Christian is a matter of the heart, and of faith:

It is a work of God

**[Jhn 15:16 NKJV] 16 “You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and [that] your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.**

This is election.

We are Christian because of the elective grace of God which leads us to faith in Jesus Christ.

He reached out to us – first

We love Him because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

Love made the first move; our love for God is simply a response to His love for us.

And the purpose of this call is to be a channel of God’s blessing to the world.

He saved us – so that we can tell others the good news.

The love that He demonstrated for us – while we were still sinners.

We need a personal relationship with Jesus Christ

We need to acknowledge our sin before God

And we accept the offer of salvation – through the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

Now – if we grasp this –

This portion of scripture makes sense to us –

Because for the Jew –

They thought God had singled them out because they were better than everyone else.

They thought this divine selection assured their salvation.

And that their possession of the Law and the temple and the ordinances was proof of their privileged place.

The one thing that they failed to see was that their election – is the result of His grace alone.

**[Rom 9:6-18 NKJV] 6 But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they [are] not all Israel who [are] of Israel,**

One of the questions that Paul anticipates is this –

If God's promises to Israel are - yes and amen – then why does it seem like many of the Jews are rejecting Jesus Christ.

Are you, Paul, saying that God's promises to Israel have failed?

And Paul's response –

Just because one has a physical connection to Abraham – just because they have a Jewish heritage – it doesn't mean that they are Jews – it doesn't mean that they are saved.

Turn with me to Matthew 3 –

I want you to see how John the Baptist confronts the religious rulers of this very thing.

**[Mat 3:4-9 NKJV] 4 Now John himself was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. 5 Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him 6 and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins. 7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "Hey – you guys want to get baptized?" 😊**

No – he said

**"Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 "Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, 9 "and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as [our] father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones.**

John the Baptist – is warning them and rebuking them, don't lean on your heritage and connection to Abraham because God can raise up thousands of descendants from these stones if He wanted to.

Again – it is about the heart – not about some label that we place our trust in.

**7 nor [are they] all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, "In Isaac your seed shall be called." 8 That is, those who [are] the children of the flesh, these [are] not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed. 9 For this [is] the word of promise: "At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son."**

Abraham was called the friend of God & father of the promise.

But the promise was that thru Sarah the son would come.

Remember – Abraham was 75 years old when God called him and told him to leave his country because God was going to make him a great nation.

11 years pass by – no children.

Sara says – “We have to help out God”

“What do you say Abram?”

Take Hagar – my servant

And Hagar conceives and has a child –

Not of the promise but a son of the flesh.

Ishmael

After the death of Sarah –

Abraham remarries and has other children

But here is the thing to remember church

God recognized only the son of the promise – Isaac

The one that God elected – the one that would come from Sarah

In fact, in Genesis 22 –

When God tests Abraham

**[Gen 22:2 NKJV] 2 Then He said, "Take now your son, your only [son] Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."**

Once again, God recognized only the one son of promise.

God recognized the son of promise – not the work of our flesh.

The bible is very clear – that our flesh profits nothing John 6:63

This doesn't mean that God did not love Ishmael or take care of Ishmael and Hagar – because He did.



But He did not acknowledge them as part of the promise.

God didn't even consider Ishmael to be a son of Abraham.

So, being a physical descendant of Abraham doesn't guarantee salvation.

Which is what Paul was saying back in verse 6.

Now, Paul anticipates the Jews saying – well Hagar was not Hebrew or Jewish -

So Paul moves to another illustration –

Rebekah

**10 And not only [this], but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, [even] by our father Isaac 11 (for [the children] not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), 12 it was said to her, "The older shall serve the younger." 13 As it is written, "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated."**

So – in this next illustration

Paul uses Rebekah

Rebekah – just like Sarah had a hard time conceiving.

So Issac pleads with the Lord and Rebekah conceives.

She has twins in her belly

And the twins were actually fighting in her belly.

Turn to Gen 25

**[Gen 25:21-23 NKJV] 21 Now Isaac pleaded with the LORD for his wife, because she [was] barren; and the LORD granted his plea, and Rebekah his wife conceived. 22 But the children struggled together within her; and she said, "If [all is] well, why [am I like] this?" So she went to inquire of the LORD. 23 And the LORD said to her: "Two nations [are] in your womb, Two peoples shall be separated from your body; [One] people shall be stronger than the other, And the older shall serve the younger."**

God elected Isaac – the son that was going to be born from Sarah

And note here – God elected the seed of promise to be Jacob instead of the older twin, Esau.

Because promise and privilege come from the Lord – not social customs.

God knew ahead of time how these two would turn out.

So before either had done anything, before either one of them were born

God announced that Jacob would be the recipient of the promise.

God decided which son would be the father of the faithful

God's election of Jacob had nothing to do with anything Jacob had done.

His election was according to foreknowledge

He knew that Esau was going to be carnal and worldly – caring nothing for the things of God – that's why Esau sold his birthright for a bowl of lentils.

I had you make a note of verse 13 – back in Romans

**13 As it is written, "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated."**

Remember – this is God speaking (Paul is quoting Malach 1:2-3)

And many people have a hard time with this verse –

They will say that this doesn't sound very nice – especially coming from God

God hates Esau – poor Esau never had a chance because God hated him.

But that is not what the Lord is saying –

Turn with me to Luke 14 –

These are the words of Jesus –

**[Luk 14:26 NKJV] 26 "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.**

Jesus doesn't mean we have to hate our parents and children in order to follow Him.

Jesus is saying that compared to our love for and our devotion to Jesus, all other loves must pale.

It speaks of priority

Jesus says – if you are going to love Me you are going to need to love your father less, and your mother less, and your children less and your life less

No one can serve two masters – either you will hate the one and love the other

God loved Jacob and He loved Esau a little less than Jacob

We get so caught up in that God hated Esau –

I think the real hard part to grasp is that He loved Jacob

Because Jacob was a schemer, a deceiver, he was all messed up and yet God still says, I love Jacob.

And then He looks at us and says, “I love you”

“I know everything about you”

“I know where you come from”

“I know where you are going”

“I know your struggles”

And He still says to us, “I love you”

His grace is unbelievable

His grace is so wonderful

His grace is so abundantly good to us

He hated Esau but loved Jacob

And He loves us.

**14 What shall we say then? [Is there] unrighteousness with God? Certainly not!**

**15 For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion."**

So after looking at God's election of Isaac over Ishmael

And God's election of Jacob over Esau

Paul anticipates the question -

Is God unfair?

Is God unjust?

By the way – there may be times in our walk where we will ask these same questions.

Especially during times of trials and hardships.

Why does it seem like God is blessing that person or that family – and not me.

Why did God allow this unfavorable diagnosis in my life?

At times – it may seem like God is unfair.

Paul's response

No way Jose

Paul provides us with an important reminder – God is perfect! His ways are above reproach.

God bestows mercy on those it OUGHT to be given to, though we don't see how or why.

When God blesses someone, instead of looking at the individual who has been blessed and trying to figure out "Why?"

We ought to look to God and say, "That's why!"

Because God IS perfect, what He does is perfect.

His reasons are perfect.

One of our biggest problems is that we try to understand God's perfect ways.

And the fact that we don't understand – that's proof in itself that we are not perfect.

We judge God on human terms and on human conditions.

You see to even raise the issue of unfairness – assumes that we know what fair is.

And in order to judge God that His ways are unfair – we would have to know everything that God knows.

And we would have to be perfect in our judgment.

The problem is never with God – it's with us when we attempt to put our puny limited perspective on God and judge Him for what He does.

And Paul quotes here from Exodus 33 –

Last week – we looked at the golden calf episode –

In Exodus 33, Moses goes to back up the mountain to intercede on behalf of the people

And as Moses is up there with God – he asks God if he could see His glory.

God's reply was basically saying, "Moses, I'll be gracious to who I want to be gracious to, you are not in a position to tell me who to be merciful to".

We get so caught up on God showing mercy to one person and not the next –

That is not the emphasis of what Paul is saying -

The emphasis is on the mercy of God.

God is not only just, God is more than just: He is merciful. If God were only just we would all stand condemned before Him, because all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

God is more than just, and so loved the world that He sent his only Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

**16 So then [it is] not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. 17 For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth." 18 Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.**

Did God know ahead of time how Pharaoh would respond to Moses' request to let Israel go?

Yes

Did God know how Pharaoh would react to each of the plagues?

Yes

Again – God knew just as He knew that Esau would grow up not be interested in the things of God.

God didn't create Pharaoh this way.



Pharaoh had free will.

God raised Pharaoh up in a time and a season to use him.

This hard hearted, godless man – God used for His purposes.

Turn to Exodus 7

You see church, Pharaoh was given opportunity after opportunity to repent.

He was given the opportunity to turn from his ways.

But after each plague – we see that his response was that his heart only became harder and harder to God's will.

**[Exo 7:13, 22 NKJV] 13 And Pharaoh's heart grew hard, and he did not heed them, as the LORD had said. ... 22 Then the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments; and Pharaoh's heart grew hard, and he did not heed them, as the LORD had said.**

**[Exo 8:15 NKJV] 15 But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart and did not heed them, as the LORD had said.**

**[Exo 8:19 NKJV] 19 Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, "This [is] the finger of God." But Pharaoh's heart grew hard, and he did not heed them, just as the LORD had said.**

**[Exo 8:32 NKJV] 32 But Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also; neither would he let the people go.**

And if we continue through the first 10 chapters in Exodus – we find that Pharaoh hardened his heart seven times before it is mentioned that God hardened his heart.

God honored Pharaoh's choice –

You want a hard heart – I will give you a hard heart.

God was only confirming in the heart of Pharaoh what Pharaoh had already done to himself.

So without violating Pharaoh's choice, God turned those choices to good.

And even though what Pharaoh did was wrong, God turned it to good by sending the news of His glory throughout the ancient world.

**Why does God choose some and apparently not choose others?**

We may not like this answer, but the truth is that He does it because He wants to.

As the Creator of the Universe, it is wholly within His rights to make choices like this.

In reality, God doesn't have to show mercy to any of us.

In reality, God ought to be sending us all to hell because of our rebellion against Him.

But instead, He chooses to show mercy and compassion.

So one more question as we close this morning –

So how do I know if I'm a person to whom God has shown mercy?

Respond to His mercy and you'll find out.

Amen -

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

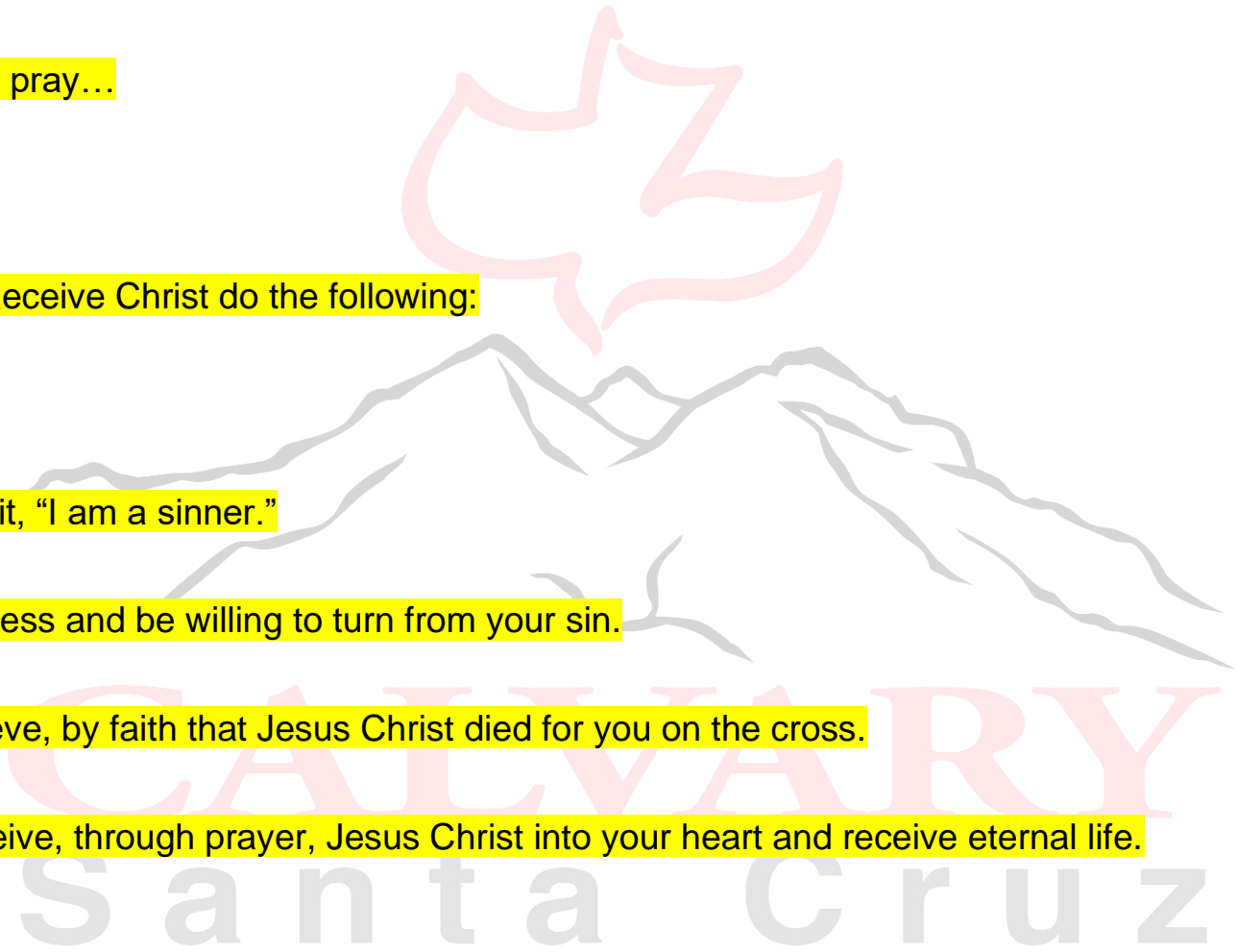
Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I



accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

This is part of the mystery of it all.

God is sovereign and makes His choices. Yet somehow He has set it all up so that we from our perspective have a choice, as Paul will say in the next chapter:

**(Rom 10:13 KJV) For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.**

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 '

May the LORD bless you and protect you.

May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you.

May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'

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